

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

mystery magazine

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A threat to an established pattern is often the springboard of initiative. ♦

PIGGY
BANK



ARE YOU a professional killer?" he asked.

"Of course," I said.

He was a boy of about twelve and he wore glasses and a clean, but obviously aging jacket. "Good," he said. "I'd like you to murder my great uncle on my father's side, James Rawlins. I can pay you \$27.50." He looked past me at my cluttered study-livingroom. "Actually I have \$27.56, but I thought you'd prefer to deal in round numbers."

"I suppose you were saving for a bicycle?"

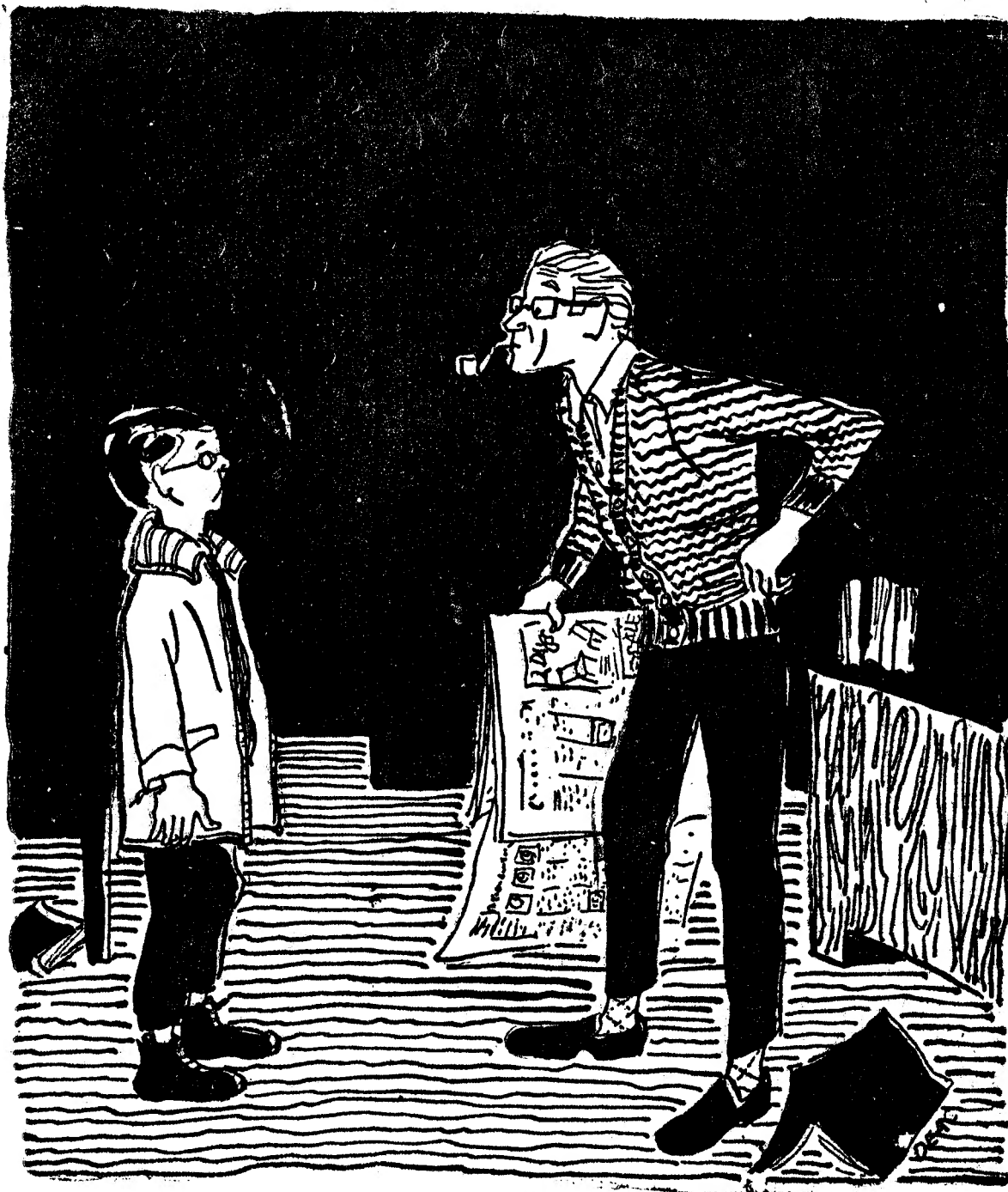
"No. Webster's International Dictionary. Third edition. Despite what people say about it."

I let him in and cleared a chair of some books. "Why do you want your Uncle Rawlins killed?"

"He's interfering with my mother's education."

I began filling one of my straight pipes. "Perhaps you could elaborate just a little bit?"

"The situation is simple," he said. "My mother is a widow. My father died when I was three. His parents—my grandparents—were killed in an automobile accident when he was ten and Uncle James took over his rearing. Uncle James is quite rich. However, since he



did not approve of his nephew's marriage, we were left penniless when father died. Uncle James—who has never bothered to see me, by the way—has grudgingly been keeping us going these past nine years with a small amount of money each month, but now he threat-

ens to discontinue that entirely unless mother quits college."

I had the feeling the boy could have written *War and Peace* on the back of a postcard. "Your Uncle James disapproves of higher education for women?"

"I don't think that's it," he said.

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"I believe it's because through all these years he has derived a certain sadistic enjoyment in our dependency upon him."

"And this will end if your mother is educated?"

"Naturally. My mother accepted his charity—rather than get a job—because she felt I should have her undivided attention during my crucial childhood years. However, I am now twelve and about to enter high school, and mother believes that now it is safe for her to finish her education. She was a junior when she left college to get married. It is her intention to become a teacher and thereby achieve our independence."

"Why doesn't she just declare her independence right now by getting a job?"

"That is what she is going to do if she can't go to college. But I don't think that's at all wise. What kind of a job could an untrained woman of thirty-two get? Especially in view of automation."

"What is your name?"

"Donald."

"Well, Donald," I said, "has it ever occurred to you that your uncle's monthly payment, small as it is, will cease entirely if I kill him?"

"Yes. But on the other hand I am his only blood relative and I rather think that I would eventually get some portion of his estate,

whether I am mentioned in his will or not. I would imagine his beneficiaries would prefer a settlement to a court fight."

Apparently the boy had thought of everything. "Donald," I said, "let's go back to the beginning. What made you think that I would murder anyone at all for \$27.50?"

"I didn't. That was just a gambit for your sympathy. I thought you might do it for nothing. *If* you did decide to kill Uncle James."

"I'm glad you emphasized the 'if,'" I said, "because that brings me to my second point. Whatever gave you the idea that I'm a professional killer?"

He smiled. "You said so, didn't you?"

"My dear boy," I said, "when I hear a knock at my door and find a small boy who blithely asks me if I am a professional killer, what would you expect a man of my acerbic temperament to answer?"

He grinned. "Exactly what you did."

I flushed slightly. "Donald, when you attend college, in what field do you intend to specialize?"

"Psychology."

I was not the least surprised. "Since there are any number of people in this world, why did you knock on my door? And how did you know about my temperament?"

"My mother happens to be in your Comparative Literature class."

I thought about that. Oh, yes. Madelaine Rawlins. Straight A student. I remembered her October thesis, *Why Women Don't Read Hemingway*.

"But surely she has other instructors and professors? Why did you come to me?"

"You're the one she talks about."

Naturally I was curious. "Favorably?"

"Yes and no," Donald said. "But anyway, I don't know any adult males and so I had to turn to someone."

I sighed. "Just what in the world do you expect me to do?"

"Well, I thought you might go to see Uncle James. Reason with him. But if that doesn't work, and it probably won't, you could tell him that I tried to hire you to kill him."

"Why not tell him yourself?"

"He wouldn't take me seriously, but coming from an adult, he might believe it. You could even pretend that you're considering taking the job."

"And you imagine that such a threat coming from an assistant professor would throw him into a fit of abject terror?"

"You don't have to mention about being a professor. You could sort of leave that up in the air. Let

him think just whatever he likes."

"That I really am a professional killer?"

"Why not?"

I shook my head. "Donald, when you attend your psychology classes, please don't go to sleep. You have a lot to learn. I sympathize deeply with your mother's problem, but I haven't the slightest intention of threatening anyone."

I expected him to press his point, but he merely smiled and rose. "I guess I'll be going."

I let him get to the door before I spoke again, "Donald, if you really could hire somebody to murder your uncle, would you?"

His face hardened. "Yes, I would."

The next morning while lecturing to my Comparative Literature class, I sought out and noted the regular features and rather attractive brunette coiffure of Donald's mother. Near the end of the period I interrupted my discourse to say, "Mrs. Rawlins, would you please remain a few moments after the bell?"

When we were alone, she looked at me expectantly. "Yes, Professor Weatherby?"

"Mrs. Rawlins," I said, "did your son tell you that he came to see me last night?"

She lifted her eyebrows. "Why, no."

"He offered me \$27.50 to murder his Uncle James."

She smiled slightly. "Did you accept?"

I cleared my throat. "He informed me of your particular predicament. Do you intend to quit the university?"

"I imagine I'll have to. Though I do wish I could have at least finished this semester."

"Your husband's uncle seems to have very little contact with you. How did he manage to discover that you were attending college?"

"I write to him about once every six months—more or less as a duty, though he never replies—and I mentioned it. I thought he would be pleased at the prospect of soon having us off his hands. Apparently he wasn't. I received word from his lawyer to that effect."

"Your son mentioned that you were considering taking a job rather than continue to accept the allowance?"

"Yes. If I can find one."

"Donald seemed to think that I could do something about it. Besides killing his Uncle James, I mean."

The gray eyes studied me. "Can you?"

I was slightly uncomfortable. "I don't see what influence I could possibly have."

"Did Donald have any sugges-

tions for a course of action?"

"Well . . . yes. He thought that I ought to see his uncle and try to reason with him. And if that didn't work, then. . . ."

She smiled again. "Yes?"

My collar was definitely tight. "But the whole thing is ridiculous. I am a perfect stranger to you, to Donald, and to his uncle."

"Of course," she said. "So there's no need for you to get involved." She glanced at her watch. "Do you mind if I go now? I wouldn't want to be late for my next class."

When she was gone, I sat down in one of the student chairs and engaged in the process of thinking. I eventually sighed my way into a decision.

I arrived at Rawlins Tool & Die at approximately two-thirty.

James Rawlins' secretary was narrow-eyed and appeared to have a headache. "Which company do you represent?"

"None," I said. "My business with Mr. Rawlins is personal."

"Mr. Rawlins is an extremely busy man. Perhaps you could give me some idea what this personal business is?"

"No," I said. "I couldn't."

She regarded me coldly. "Take a chair. I'll let you know when—and if—Mr. Rawlins will see you."

Perhaps it was her idea, but I was kept waiting forty-five min-

utes before she condescended to show me into his office.

James Rawlins was large and gray-haired, but tanned and obviously fit. He probably took great pride in defeating tennis opponents thirty years his junior.

He glanced at his memo pad impatiently. "Mr. Weatherby?"

"Yes." I decided to get directly to the point. "Mr. Rawlins, I have been offered \$27.50 to kill you."

He looked up. "That's the most original touch I've heard yet. Am I supposed to offer you thirty dollars not to?"

"No."

"And who made you this munificent offer?"

"Your grandnephew."

His eyes hardened. "Just who *are* you?"

"Weatherby," I said. "But you have that information already. Anything else is extraneous." My attention was momentarily distracted by a bookcase containing a number of trophies celebrating his prowess at tennis, golf, and sailing. "Mr. Rawlins," I said, "for the past nine years you have been sparingly supporting your grandnephew and his mother, but now at the prospect that your overwhelming generosity will no longer be needed, you seem to object."

"That's my business."

"In any event," I said, "it ap-

pears that Madelaine Rawlins would prefer getting a job to continuing to receive money under your terms."

He flushed angrily. "What kind of a job can she get? Waiting on tables? All right, let her."

"It seems to me that you are, in essence, still punishing your nephew for choosing to disobey your wishes regarding his marriage partner."

His color was still high. "Why the devil did my grandnephew choose to go to you with his miserable \$27.50?"

"He thought I might be able to help him."

He studied me and wariness slowly crept into his eyes. "And just how did he think you could help him?"

I reached toward my inside coat pocket for my tobacco pouch. The movement seemed to trigger galvanic electricity in his veins. He flinched and waited tensely.

I hesitated, evaluating the situation, and smiled with a certain significance. I removed the hand from my coat empty—for now, the motion seemed to indicate.

Rawlins tried a weak smile. "Of course you wouldn't kill anybody for \$27.50?"

"Naturally not," I said. "However money isn't everything." Really now, Weatherby, I told myself,

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why ever do you say such things?
He licked his lips. "And naturally you wouldn't kill anybody in his office when he is surrounded by literally hundreds of employees?"

I'm afraid I showed teeth. "I understand that the safest place to murder anyone these days is in Grand Central Station during a rush hour. No one has the initiative to interfere, and the thousand witnesses will tell a thousand different stories."

Rawlins now was perspiring.

I pulled myself together. Somehow I had taken a wrong turning and now—in the interests of continuity, at least—very little remained except for me to kill him.

Retreat was obviously in order.

My eyes searched the room for inspiration. They fastened upon a framed photograph of a football team, vintage 1920's. Rawlins was undoubtedly in one of the rows.

"Mr. Rawlins," I said, "you have never seen your grandnephew?"

"No. Never laid eyes on him."

"Or talked to him?"

"No."

I glanced at my watch. Yes, it was just about the right time. "Mr. Rawlins," I said, "I want you to come with me."

He was not at all happy.

"You will be perfectly safe," I said. "You have my word."

My word obviously meant nothing

to him but, on the other hand, he decided that he had no choice. He sighed and rose.

Outside the office, he stopped at his secretary's desk and cleared his throat. "Dora, if I'm not back in one hour I want you to call my cousin Horatio and tell him I can't make it today."

Oh, my, I thought, since Donald told me that he was James Rawlins' only blood relative, then obviously this cousin Horatio bit is a plea for help.

His words, and possibly the tone of his voice, had alerted Dora. She stared at me, and I had the uneasy feeling that she might be memorizing my features for a police lineup.

I smiled. "What your employer means specifically and absolutely, is that you are to call no one—no one at all—for at least one hour. Otherwise our business deal might terminate unsatisfactorily." I turned to Rawlins for confirmation.

"Yes," he said hastily. "Don't call anybody or talk to anybody for one hour." He took a stab at optimism. "I should be back by then, shouldn't I?"

"Of course," I said.

Five minutes later, we drove away in my car. I selected the Stevenson High School at random and parked at the football practice field. The first and second teams

were engaged in daily scrimmage.

"What now?" Rawlins asked.

"Just watch," I said.

After about ten minutes, one of the backs succeeded in breaking through tackle and scampered thirty-five yards for a touchdown. He was a tall, good-looking boy, and he grinned as he tossed the ball back upfield.

"That's your grandnephew," I said.

Rawlins stared at the boy for a full minute. A tight smile appeared on his face. "So he's big and strong and knows how to play football. What am I supposed to do now? Run to my lawyer and change my will?"

"That might help," I said. "But for the present, I simply suggest that you continue sending your regular allowance to Donald's mother and withdraw your objections concerning her college attendance.

His eyes went back to the boy.

"There is one other thing," I said. "I don't want you ever to talk to him or see him again. I think he'll be much happier that way."

"That's an order?"

"Yes." I turned on the ignition and pulled away from the curb. "By the way, I wouldn't bother going to the police about any of this. In the first place, it would be just your word against mine. And in

the second, I don't think you would enjoy the publicity of having a grandnephew who offers \$27.50 for your death."

"And if I don't follow your suggestions in all respects, you would ... take care of me?"

I smiled—rather like a cold-eyed killer, I thought—and said nothing.

Frankly, I was enjoying myself, both for performance and accomplishment.

At Sixth and Wells, I stopped for a red light, directly opposite the central police station. Evidently a change of shift period had just occurred. Dozens of uniformed policemen were descending the wide cement stairs.

Rawlins quickly opened the door on his side and stepped out.

Naturally I was alarmed. "Have you forgotten what I said about going to the police?"

"No, I haven't forgotten and I have no intention of telling the police. However I like having them around me because it gives me the safety to inform you of two facts. First of all, that wasn't my grandnephew."

I frowned. "You said you'd never seen him before."

"I haven't. Not personally, that is. But every year his mother seems to make it her business to send me a snapshot of him, so I am perfect-

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ly aware of what he really looks like."

He smiled, but without humor. "And secondly, before I entered this car I memorized the license number. I intend to write a full account of what happened and deposit it, along with your license number, in a safe place. If anything should happen to me, the police will know immediately who is responsible." He slammed the door shut.

The traffic light had turned to green and there was nothing for me to do but go ahead. I do not know whether I was more embarrassed or more depressed, but whichever took precedence, I still came to the reluctant conclusion that it was my duty to inform the interested parties of my failure. I stopped at a drugstore telephone booth to look up Madelaine Rawlins' address.

When I arrived there, Donald opened the front door of the one-family dwelling at my knock. "Oh, hello, Professor." He showed me into the comfortable livingroom.

"Where is your mother?" I asked.

"She's out shopping. At the supermarket, I think."

I sat down. "Donald, I'm afraid I've made things even worse than they were."

When I finished telling him

about my meeting with James Rawlins, Donald smiled.

I flushed slightly. "Well, I tried my best."

"That's all right," he said. "You got a lot further than I thought you would."

"Then you *expected* me to fail?"

He shrugged. "I just thought it might be pretty hard to reason with Uncle James."

I studied him with renewed interest. "Donald, something has just occurred to me. When you came to me with your story, what would be my most obvious first action?"

"I don't know."

"But I'm sure you do. The first thing I would do would be to see your mother and talk to her. Isn't that right? And possibly be impressed?"

"I guess so."

I smiled. "Donald, I have the strange feeling that when you came to me, you had in mind a solution to your problem which you did not mention."

"Did I?"

"Yes," I said. "How does it happen that your mother never remarried?"

"I don't know. I guess it's because intelligent men are few and far between."

His eyes went to the clock. "I *think* she went shopping." He rose abruptly and went to the French

secretary against one wall. He opened the top drawer and seemed relieved. "Yes, it's still there."

"What is?" I asked automatically.

"The gun," Donald said.

I got out of my chair and walked over. The butt of what appeared to be an automatic protruded from the drawer of tightly packed books. "Is it loaded?"

"It shouldn't be," Donald said. "I emptied the clip."

I reached into the drawer. The weapon seemed to be stuck and I pulled. The automatic fired.

I closed my eyes for a moment. "Evidently it was loaded." I removed the clip and examined it. "It's full now and apparently someone put an extra bullet in the chamber."

Donald removed a few of the books. "No harm done. It just went through a few of these and stuck in the last one."

"Donald," I said, "you were worried that your mother had taken the gun? Why?"

He put the books under his arm. "I'll get rid of these. There's no need mother has to know about this." He smiled faintly. "She might think you weren't very intelligent."

He evidently went down into the basement because I heard the sound of a furnace door being opened.

Through the front window I saw Madelaine carrying two bags of groceries up the path to the house.

Had all this talk about killing James Rawlins given her the idea of personally solving her problem by. . . . I glanced at the automatic in my hand. Out of sight, out of mind. I shoved the gun under the davenport.

I would have to talk to Madelaine alone. If that wasn't possible now, I would speak to her at the university tomorrow.

Madelaine opened the front door. "Why, hello, Professor. It's nice to see you."

Donald returned from the basement and I re-told my encounter with James Rawlins.

Madelaine shook her head. "You really shouldn't have taken all that trouble. I'm sure things will work out." She moved toward the kitchen. "Would you care to stay for supper?"

"Well . . ." I said, and was easily persuaded.

In all, it was rather a pleasant evening and reclaimed the day. I did not leave until after nine.

The next morning, after my first class, I found two men waiting. They showed me their badges and identified themselves.

"We'd like you to come with us to headquarters," Sergeant Waller

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said. "Last night at approximately eleven-thirty, James Rawlins was shot to death."

I experienced sudden overwhelming dismay. Why hadn't I made it a distinct point to speak to Madelaine last night? Perhaps I could have prevented her from . . .

Waller continued. "This morning when his lawyer heard about the event, he came to us with a sealed envelope which Rawlins had given him earlier in the evening. We read all about the \$27.50 and so we came here."

"You traced my license number, I suppose?"

"We didn't have to take the time. Donald Rawlins told us where to find you."

"The letter can be explained," I said. "I am not a professional killer. Not even an amateur, for that matter."

"Maybe not," Waller said non-committally, "but we'll talk about that at headquarters."

I cleared my throat. "I can understand why I am a suspect, of course. Do you have any others?"

He thought about it for a few seconds before he decided to answer. "Naturally we're talking to the boy."

"Utterly ridiculous," I said. "He wouldn't harm a fly." I tried to make the next question casual. "Any suspects besides the two of

us, like a genuine public enemy?"

"Not yet."

Good, I thought. *Perhaps Madelaine was safe after all.* I almost felt cheerful.

In their unmarked police car, I said, "Well, gentlemen, I've never been taken in for murder before. What is the procedure?"

"We'll ask you some questions," Sergeant Waller said, "and if we don't like your answers, we'll take your fingerprints and give you a paraffin test."

"Paraffin test? Oh, yes. For powder grains?" Then I remembered and laughed slightly. "As a matter of fact, I think you might find powder grains on my right hand."

Waller looked at me.

"It was an accident," I said. "I happened to be handling an automatic in Mrs. Rawlins' house when it discharged. If we could stop there for just a moment, her son could explain everything."

"We won't have to stop there," Waller said. "He's at headquarters."

At headquarters, Waller took me to a room where Madelaine and Donald were waiting.

"Donald," I said, "will you please tell the sergeant here how I happen to have powder grains on my hand?"

Donald's face was blank. "Powder grains? What powder grains?"

"The ones I got when that automatic accidentally discharged in your livingroom yesterday."

He shook his head slowly. "I don't remember anything like that happening."

I blinked. Why did the boy lie?

"Donald," Sergeant Waller said, "you *did* offer Professor Weatherby \$27.50 to kill your uncle, didn't you?"

"Well, yes. But it was sort of a joke and I admitted it to him."

"But why did you make the offer in the first place?"

Donald looked at the floor. "Well, my mother's in one of his classes and from the way she talked about him I knew that she was very impressed."

Madelaine colored faintly. "Donald!"

He continued. "So I just thought that if the two of them got somehow introduced . . . I mean talking to each other . . . well, maybe nature would take its course and our problems would be solved." He sighed. "I guess things just worked too fast and too strong, and he thought he was doing us a favor by killing Uncle James."

The door opened and a plainclothesman appeared. "The boys just found a gun on the grounds of the James Rawlins place. It looks like the murder weapon and it's got some fingerprints on it."

I was about to caution Madeline not to say a word until she had seen a lawyer, but then I looked at Donald. I closed my eyes. The computer section of my brain neatly sorted facts and came up with a conclusion: I had stepped into a little boy's fiendish pit and the walls were dead vertical.

Waller tapped my shoulder. "Professor Weatherby, would you come with me please?"

I attempted a riposte with the straw of reason. "Sergeant, if I murdered someone, I most surely would not conveniently leave the weapon with my fingerprints in the neighborhood."

The plainclothesman had the answer. "There are a couple of acres of woods and underbrush around the Rawlins house. The way I figure it is that after the killer shot Rawlins he ran out of the house into that tangle and stumbled. The gun flew out of his hand and because it was dark and no moon, he couldn't find it again. Besides, he didn't have the time to do much looking. The servants heard the shot and were calling the police, so he decided to get himself out, hoping that maybe we wouldn't find the gun, or maybe he could get a chance to come back later and look for it."

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department and after that to another room where I waited with Sergeant Waller.

Yes, it was quite ingenious and I was . . . I blushed . . . the patsy. Donald had anticipated everything. He had come to me with his fantastic offer and, naturally, my next logical move had been to see his mother. Just as logically—since she *was* an attractive intelligent woman—I had been impressed and reacted by endeavoring to help her. That had taken the form of my visit to James Rawlins.

At that point, Donald could not have been absolutely certain of what I would say or do, but evidently he had had high hopes and I had not disappointed him.

There had remained only the process of getting my fingerprints on the automatic and powder grains on my hand. He had booby-trapped the gun in the drawer in such a manner that when I pulled, it would fire. So, last night Donald had taken care not to unduly disturb my fingerprints when he used the gun to kill James Rawlins. When that had been accomplished, he had left the automatic on the grounds for the police to find.

Another thought tugged at me. Had it been *entirely* Donald's idea? That bothered me almost more than my present predicament.

I had almost surrendered to utter resignation when the door opened and a laboratory technician appeared.

"Those aren't the professor's fingerprints on the gun," he announced cheerfully.

To say that I was surprised was to whisper.

Waller frowned. "But it was the murder weapon, wasn't it?"

"Sure. That much checks out. But not the professor's fingerprints. As a matter of fact you could almost tell from the size alone. I'd say they were the prints of a woman or a boy."

Sergeant Waller gave the necessary order. "Fingerprint the woman and the boy."

When that was done, Waller and I went to see them.

Who *had* killed James Rawlins? I wondered. Donald? Or Madeleine?

"Donald," I said, "my fingerprints were not on the gun."

He sighed. "Not even one?"

"Not even one."

He looked at Waller. "Did you check the clip?"

Waller nodded. "When we look for fingerprints we don't miss anything."

He looked at the floor again. "I was hoping that . . . whoever . . . used the gun would have sense enough to wear gloves. That way

some of the professor's fingerprints would still be on the gun. The clip especially."

Waller's eyes were narrow. "Are you trying to tell us that you were trying to frame Professor Weatherby?"

Donald rubbed his neck. "I was going to wait a week or so—until his motive for killing Uncle James was stronger, so to speak—and then commit the crime. I would have left the gun with the professor's fingerprints behind."

Waller leaned forward. "But you decided to kill him last night? Why?"

"Donald," I said, "don't say another word. Not another word."

But the damage had already been done, and Sergeant Waller had evidently re-examined some of Donald's previous words.

"Just a minute," he said. "You said that you hoped that 'whoever' used the gun would have had enough sense to wear gloves. Does that mean that *you* didn't shoot your uncle?" His eyes went irrevocably to Madelaine.

"Donald," I said again, "not another word until we've seen a lawyer."

But Madelaine shook her head. "No, Donald. I want you to tell the sergeant everything. Do you understand?"

He seemed to agree. "I guess I

might as well since they've got all our fingerprints anyway." He sighed. "It's one thing planning a murder—even fun—but it's another thing actually committing it. Last night I thought things over for a long time and decided that I really couldn't go through with it after all."

Waller nodded. "Go on."

"When you came to our house and told us that Uncle James had been murdered, I knew that *I* hadn't killed him, and I was almost positive that Professor Weatherby hadn't, so when I looked in the drawer where the gun was supposed to be and found that it was gone, well . . ."

Madelaine smiled faintly. "You thought that *I* had killed Uncle James? And you tried to protect me by implicating Professor Weatherby?"

Donald's eyes went to me. "I'm really sorry. I've kind of gotten to like you, but still I would have preferred that you go to jail rather than . . ." he swallowed, "... somebody else."

The laboratory technician appeared. "Their fingerprints aren't the ones on the gun either."

Madelaine was the only one of us not surprised. She smiled. "Of course I didn't kill Uncle James. I don't think murder is the solution to anything. Especially if you do it

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yourself. We're all agreed on that."

Donald was immensely relieved, but still puzzled. "But why should someone carefully wipe the professor's fingerprints off the gun, and how did the killer get hold of our automatic in the first place?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," I said. "The last time I touched the .45 was when I shoved it under the davenport in your livingroom."

Sergeant Waller frowned. "A .45? The murder weapon was .25 caliber. A Beretta."

"In that case, Donald," I said, "your automatic is probably still under the davenport and has been all this time."

Sergeant Waller surveyed us with a trace of irritation. "Well, if none of you did it, then who the devil did?"

I thought about that too. "Sergeant, it seems to me a remarkable coincidence that the killer should choose the precise time when my license number was put into an incriminating letter. Clearly someone hoped I would be blamed. Did his lawyer know what was in the letter?"

"No. Rawlins just gave it to him with instructions to give it to the police if he died violently."

I pondered that. "If he didn't tell his lawyer, the chances are pretty good that he told no one else, still . . ." I saw a light. "Was the letter

possibly typewritten, Sergeant?"

"Yes."

"Neatly and without errors?"

"Yes."

I nodded. "Rawlins was a businessman, but I doubt if businessmen are good typists. He undoubtedly dictated the letter. I suggest you get the fingerprints of his secretary. I believe her name is Dora." I smiled with justifiable satisfaction. "I hope *that* will teach her to keep me waiting forty-five minutes."

We read about it in the newspaper the next day.

Dora had been led to believe for quite some time that she would become Mrs. James Rawlins. When she had finally realized that matrimony was definitely not on his agenda, she had plotted murder and suicide. However, after my encounter with Rawlins, she had decided that perhaps suicide was not really necessary after all. It would be preferable to have a professional murderer take the blame for his death—and professional murderer she thought I was.

As for Madelaine, at the end of the semester she received an A in my Comparative Literature course. There have been some sly hints from faculty members that I exhibited favoritism, but there is no truth to that whatsoever.

My wife earned her grade.